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SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT TEAM CONCLUDES ELECTION PREPARATION
NEEDS A MAJOR BOOST

Classified By: Political Counselor Russ Hanks for reason 1.4 (b) and (d)
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11. (U) SUMMARY: The National Democratic Institute delivered what its president called a wake-up call about election administrations deficiencies in its final report issued at the conclusion of its international pre-election assessment mission completed on May 10. The report highlighted progress in some categories of pre-electoral preparation, but noted that critical work must be done immediately in order to ensure credible elections in 2007. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) At a major press conference attended by more than 70 Nigerian journalists, NDI presented the final report compiled by a international pre-election assessment delegation made up of Sir Ketumile Masire, former President of Botswana; Joe Clark, former Prime Minister of Canada; Karl Offmann, former President of Mauritius, Hage Geingob, former Namibian Prime Minister, Raila Odinga; member of the Kenyan parliament, Martin Luther King III, U.S. Human Rights Activist, and Ken Wollack, President of NDI. The message delivered to the press was that significant challenges to holding credible elections remain and that "concerted, forceful and sustained efforts" are required to ensure the necessary preparations.

13. (U) In answering a question at the press conference about the delegations view on the third term, the NDI president Ken Wallack noted that the political context greatly affects the electoral environment, and that in Nigeria discussion of the third term issue obscured detailed examination of the details of the administrative and technical preparations for the 2007 elections. Former Botswana President Masire emphasized the stakes involved by saying a failed election process in Nigeria could negatively affect all of Africa.

14. (C) In a private meeting with the AMB, the NDI president noted that many of those with whom the delegation met expressed a lack of confidence in INEC's independence, and its credibility. He also noted that he has encountered two types of election administrators; one who centralizes the process and says all must come through the director and a second type who seeks to give stakeholders a sense of ownership over the process. The second type usually has better luck in building credibility and confidence in the individual running the operation and the general electoral process. He described INEC chairman Iwu as the classic type one, whose strong-man approach was destined to fail.

15. (U) The NDI delegation met with the INEC chairman, whom they characterized as "defensive" about the lack of preparation for the 2007 elections, the lack of a capital budget and the delay in passing the electoral bill. President Obasanjo was more forthcoming in his joint meeting with the NDI delegation, also attended by Iwu. President Obasanjo admitted problems with preparation, and thanked NDI for coming early enough in the process to offer practical advice.

16. (U) Chief among the recommendations were for INEC to issue an election calendar complete with deadlines for registration, nominations, etc., and begin voter's registration and a public education campaign on the new voter's registration process and cards. NDI also called for INEC to recruit unbiased election officials, ensure the National Assembly exercises appropriate legislative oversight over the implementation of the electoral bill after it is passed, outline in conjunction with security officials a plan to enhance elections security, and initiate an expedited process to adjudicate election complaints.

17. (C) Comment: NDI's pre-electoral assessment provides an insightful and timely wake-up call for those watching and organizing elections in Nigeria. The report notes technical and political issues which if left unattended, could be problematic. Implicit in NDI's message was that for the elections in Nigeria in 2007 to be credible, INEC and the Nigerian government must clearly demonstrate the necessary political will, as a necessary first step, in making credible elections possible.

CAMPBELL